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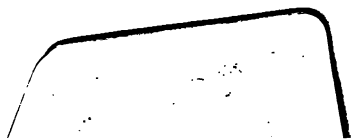
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LITTLE FAN



OR THE LONDON MATCH-GIRL.





LITTLE FAN.

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LITTLE FAN;

OR,

*THE LIFE AND FORTUNES OF A
LONDON MATCH-GIRL.*

By G. TODD.

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND CO.

1874

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CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE SHILLING,	7

CHAPTER II.

HOME,	12
-----------------	----

CHAPTER III.

THE TEA,	15
--------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

RAGGED JACK,	20
------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTOR'S VISIT,	25
-------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

	PAGE
'GOOD-BYE,'	32

CHAPTER VII.

ALONE IN THE WORLD,	36
-------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII.

'IN THE COUNTRY,'	43
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

NEW PLANS,	51
----------------------	----

CHAPTER X.

THE HOME IN WALES,	60
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XI.

THE END,	63
--------------------	----



LITTLE FAN.



CHAPTER I.

THE SHILLING.

IT was a cold wet day in the beginning of January, and all the passengers who thronged one of the busy thoroughfares of London were hurrying along to gain the shelter of their homes, and enjoy the comforts of their warm firesides,—that is to say, as many as had them; for there were many of the poor of London, mingling with their richer neighbours, who could boast of no shelter from the bitter wind and drenching rain. Among the

latter might be noticed a gentleman, somewhat advanced in years. He had a kind, noble face, lit up with a friendly smile. Perhaps he was thinking of the glad welcome he would receive from his wife and children on his arrival at home.

While thus indulging his happy thoughts, Mr. Marston—for that was the gentleman's name—was suddenly brought to a standstill by a gentle, quivering little voice, which said earnestly and beseechingly, 'Please buy a box of matches, sir ; only a penny for two! Please do, sir!' the speaker repeated, taking note of the kindly look which even his impatience to be at home did not prevent his assuming.

He looked at the little shivering figure before him, the pinched, tiny face upturned to his, and, putting his hand into his pocket, he produced one or two coppers, which he dropped into the little blue hand, saying kindly, 'There, you had better go home now ; you look very wet.'

The child's touching look of thankfulness, as

with glistening eyes she grasped the money tightly in her hand, forcibly struck the rich man as he was hurrying away, and with a sudden impulse he took from his pocket a shilling, which he added to his former gift. 'Oh, sir,' gasped the child, whose unexpected good fortune had almost deprived her of speech, 'how pleased Benny will be!' Mr. Marston hardly waited to hear her thanks, but with a kindly nod disappeared among the crowd.

Fan—for so the little match-girl was called—turned quickly away, and ran down one of the numerous side streets, where there were few people, and, stopping in the shelter of a doorway, she cautiously opened her hand to see if really the long-wished-for money was there. Yes, there was the bright shilling, nestling among four or five coppers! Poor little Fan felt as if she was the richest girl in London at that moment. 'Oh, how pleased Benny will be!' she again murmured softly to herself. 'I was so frightened that I

wouldn't get a single ha'penny to-day. But I must take home some food, for Benny has had no dinner to-day.' Suiting the action to the word, Fan went into a baker's shop close by, and exchanged some of her precious money for a loaf of bread, and the 'store' supplied a little tea, some sugar, and, lastly, an orange for Benny. Carefully wrapping the whole in her ragged shawl, Fan darted breathlessly through numerous alleys and courts, until she arrived at a dilapidated old house in one of the most wretched districts of the great city. After a hasty scramble up two or three pairs of broken stairs, she arrived at an attic, and, gradually lessening her speed as she approached the door, she at last entered on tiptoe. The room was very dark ; and unless Fan had been acquainted with its peculiarities, she would undoubtedly have stumbled over the broken and projecting boards, for the flooring was much worn in one part of the room. However, there was light enough to see a small

straw mattress lying in the recess of the window, and on it a little wasted form gazing eagerly through the gloom at the new-comer.

‘Come along, Fan. I’m not sleeping, dear, and I’ve been waiting for you, for a long time.’

‘Benny, look what I’ve got to-day! Oh! Benny, won’t we two have a nice tea?’

The joy depicted on these children’s faces might of itself have rewarded the kind donor, whose generosity had brought a bright gleam of sunshine into the weary, monotonous lives of the little outcasts, whose chief ambition was to keep themselves from starving. After some groping about, Fan succeeded in finding a small bit of tallow candle, which she lighted to enable her to see to prepare the tea,—a ceremony which was not a common occurrence to her. And while the fire is getting lighted, and the room ‘tidied up,’ we will take a look round the home of our little friends, dimly lighted as it is by the uncertain flicker of the candle.



CHAPTER II.

HOME.

THE room was moderate in size, but one part of it was almost uninhabitable. The plaster had fallen in many places from the walls, leaving only the rafters to protect the inmates from the bitter winds and rain. The only furniture that the room contained was a wooden table, which had seen its best days, propped up on one side by an old box in default of legs, a broken chair, a few dishes and spoons, an old copper kettle, and the little mattress before mentioned.

On this mattress lay the one bright thing in the room, little Benny, seeming little fitted to

breathe the air of so miserable a dwelling. As he lay peacefully there, watching with eager eyes the movements of his sister while she flitted up and down, his clear blue eye was filled with almost heavenly peace; and his little white wasted hands were clasped, as if he was silently thanking his heavenly Father for the unlooked-for plenty which He had provided. Benny's hard cough and painful breathing showed that he was not long for earth; and his contented, happy smile seemed almost to be a reflection of the glory of the heavenly country where this helpless little one hoped to be some day, singing the praises of 'God and of the Lamb.' Fan was singularly like her brother, except that in place of his happy, peaceful smile, her face wore a hard, anxious look, which made her appear much older than she really was. Her dress and shawl were very old and threadbare, and although an attempt at mending had been repeatedly made, they were poor

protection against the cold wind and drenching rain of a London winter. She was always happy when with Benny ; and she never regretted her hard day's work, if she could only manage to bring home some little bit of food to tempt his delicate appetite. Thus these poor children lived from day to day, without a friend to help or pity them. Six years ago their mother had died, deserted by her drunken husband, leaving little Benny, her infant boy, to the care of Fan, then a child of only four years old.

The broken-hearted mother had not prayed in vain for her children's welfare, for a day or two afterwards a kind old woman, who had been a good friend to them, took the little orphans to her home in the country. Thus, till within two years, the world had seemed comparatively bright to our little friends ; but at that time the good old woman died, and the good-for-nothing father was compelled by the parish to provide for his children.

He took them back again to London, to the miserable home we have already described. There he left them to the tender mercies of the neighbours, and seldom looked after them more than once in three months, when he only frightened them by his rough ways and fearful oaths. He never inquired or cared to know how they lived, and he thought he did well by paying the half-yearly rent for their wretched habitation.

Sometimes, after one of these periodical visits, Benny's pale little face would haunt him unpleasantly even in the tap-room with his drunken associates, but he always drowned his thoughts with an unusually large amount of brandy, which generally proved the means of procuring for him two or three nights' lodging in jail.

But now the room is all 'tidied up,' and the children ready to take their tea.



CHAPTER III.

THE TEA.

LITTLE Fan has managed to make the room look as cheerful as possible. There is a small fire lighted, and the tea-kettle is singing on the hob. She is now cutting the loaf of bread carefully, fearful of losing even a crumb ; and this done, she places it, with two mugs, by Benny's side. The only thing remaining to be done is to prop up Benny so that he can eat more comfortably. This is quickly and gently done, for it is well known that love helps to make a skilful nurse. What a pleasant sight it was to watch these little orphans enjoying their meal, hardly earned as

it was ; and how happy Fan was to produce the orange, concealed till now, and share it with the little sick brother !

At length the meal was quite finished, and the remainder of the food was put away to serve for next day. Then Fan, wearied by this time, put out the candle, and lay down beside Benny, nestling close to him.

‘Now, Fan,’ said Benny, ‘tell me all about the kind gentleman.’ And Fan willingly related all her adventures, finishing up her eloquent description of the personal appearance of her benefactor with, ‘And oh ! Benny, I hope I’ll see him some day again. I’ll keep a good lookout for him.’

A slight pause ensued, and then Benny’s feeble little voice broke the silence. ‘Fan, could you sing the “Happy Land” to-night by yourself ? for I’m *so* tired, Fan, I can’t do it.’

Then, in that cold, dark room, a sweet, child-like voice might have been heard singing of

the glories of the New Jerusalem,—the Happy Land,—where both these little forsaken ones hoped to be some day, singing with the holy ‘multitude which no man can number.’ After a short pause, the little singer again began. This time it was ‘Rest for the Weary,’ a hymn well suited to both children, for both were sadly weary and longed for rest, which was soon to come to one of them,—that ceaseless, unbroken rest from which there is no waking on earth.

‘Oh, Fan,’ said Benny, ‘sometimes when I’m all alone, I long for Jesus to come and take me to the “Happy Land!” Once, Fan, I did think I had got there, everything seemed so like what I fancied it must be. I suppose I must have dreamt it.’ He sighed wearily. ‘I had just got near to Jesus, and He said very kind like, “Come, little Benny, to me;” and I cried, “Yes, I’m coming,” when I woke up, and there were no white angels, nor anything but the cold room.’

‘Oh, Benny!’ sobbed Fan, ‘you couldn’t have gone without me, and left me all alone.’

‘No, no, Fan,’ he lisped ; ‘I’ll wait till you can come too ;’ and he twined his little arms lovingly round her neck, and very soon they were fast asleep, dreaming happy, innocent dreams, with no shadows of the troubles of the next day.





CHAPTER IV.

RAGGED JACK.

THUS days wore on, Fan sometimes earning a few pence, and sometimes on very bad days not a single half-penny. She had often gone to try to see Mr. Marston again, but only once had she succeeded in meeting him. He recognised the little anxious face, and the eyes looking earnestly into his, and he stopped and said kindly, 'Is that you again, my little friend?' and again he gave her some money. As he was going on, he suddenly looked round and said, 'And how is Benny now?'

His kind look won Fan's confidence imme-

diately, and she said, with the tears in her eyes, 'Oh! sir, I'm afraid he's terrible bad.'

'Where do you live?' asked he again; and Fan eagerly explained, pointing with her finger in the direction of the court where they lived.

'Oh! sir, will you come and see Benny?' she said tremblingly.

'I'll try,' he said; and, giving her a parting nod, he went away.

Now little Fan had been cherishing serious fears for Benny for some time, and this evening, when she returned home, she fancied he looked more worn and feeble than he had ever done before. He was sleeping quietly as she entered the room, with one little thin hand lying softly on the coverlet. Fan sat down beside the bed, watching him sadly, while the hot tears *would* come into her eyes and roll down her pale cheek, as she noticed how wan he looked, and how laboured his breathing was. In a few minutes the blue eyes softly opened, and fixed

themselves upon the tearful face of little Fan.

‘Why, Fan, are you crying?’ he said.

‘Oh! it’s nothing, Benny. How have you got on all day?’

‘Oh, very well,’ he answered brightly; ‘but I’ve been wearying for you to come home, for Jack’s been here. And just look what he’s brought me!’ displaying a picture as he spoke.

To understand who ‘Jack’ is, we must go back a little in our story.

One day, when some rude boys were trying to take Fan’s little store of matches from her, a tall lanky lad appeared as her deliverer. ‘Cowards!’ he said, advancing towards them, and seeing the state of matters, ‘to steal from a girl! and such a little one too!’ he added, compassionately casting a look at Fan’s tiny figure. The boys were evidently astonished at the energetic manner of the new-comer, and slunk away one by one in all directions. When

he had seen them safely off, the big boy returned to Fan, and, hoisting her on his shoulders, he desired her to show the way to her home. This kindness quite won Fan's heart, and she gave her new friend an eloquent account of herself and Benny, and ended by inviting him to come and see the latter. Meanwhile he in return told her that he sold papers in the principal streets of the city, and managed by that means to get enough to eat. As to a lodging, he had never known what a home was, and spent his nights summer and winter on doorsteps, or any other convenient place he could find.

When Jack saw little Benny, his kind heart warmed to him immediately, and from that time he used to come and see the two children whenever a day of particularly good fortune allowed him to take a half-holiday the next.

On this special day he had discovered an old coloured print of 'the old, old story,' Jesus blessing little children. Benny was delighted

with it, and spent the evening describing its various beauties to Fan, ending off by saying, 'Oh! Fan, wouldn't you like to be one of these little children, to have His dear hand on your head? He looks so like what He was in my dream, only not so bright and shining.' That night the picture was carefully put under his pillow, and it afterwards was a constant companion to him when Fan was out, and he was all day alone.





CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTOR'S VISIT.

MR. MARSTON did not forget the promise he had made to Fan, and so one evening he made his appearance just at the time when the children had finished their evening meal. The tea things had all been put away, and Fan was about to blow out the candle, preparatory to the usual evening talk, when a step was heard on the stairs, and in a few seconds it was followed by a knock at the attic door. Fan ran eagerly to open it, for a visitor was a very rare occurrence to them, and when she saw her friend Mr.

Marston there, so great was her delight that she left him standing where he was, and, running back to Benny's side, exclaimed breathlessly, 'Oh, Benny, he's out there!'

'Who's out there?' he asked, for his imagination did not stretch so far as to suppose the 'kind gentleman' had found his way to their wretched home.

By this time Fan had remembered that her visitor was standing in the cold passage, and she turned to show him in; but in doing so she nearly knocked him over, for he had found his way into the room, and stood an amused and somewhat touched spectator.

'Are you so very pleased to see me?' he asked as he bent over Benny's mattress.

No answer came, and none was needed, for Benny's wan little face was lighted up with a bright smile, and the flush on his pale cheek betokened his pleasure.

Mr. Marston sat with Fan and Benny for some

time, talking to them in the dimly-lighted room. He then rose to go, saying a cheerful good-bye, adding, as he glanced at the poor room and scanty furniture, 'I'll come back soon, and will send some coals and other things to-morrow, and some pictures for you, Benny.'

Not only did Mr. Marston fulfil his promise as to the 'coals and other things,' but he himself came next day, accompanied by a friend of his, as he told Fan.

This gentleman advanced to Benny's side, and examined him critically, for he was a physician; then, turning to Mr. Marston, he said briefly, in answer to a question looked rather than expressed, 'No chance whatever.'

'Could we not get him taken to an hospital?' asked his questioner.

'Oh no! He could not be moved; he cannot last long.'

As he said this, the doctor met the gaze of little Fan's eyes, which were fixed upon him

with such a touching expression of mute appeal, that his own fell under it.

He was a physician of high repute in London, and as such had seen a great deal of suffering and sorrow, but never yet had shrunk from it. Now, however, the earnest, searching gaze that the child directed at him, as if trying to fathom his words, completely unnerved him, and he turned hastily away to hide his emotion. But he need not have feared any questions, for Fan's quick eyes had read the truth in his face, and she felt as she had never done before, that her darling Benny was soon going from her. She fell on her knees at his side, and, hiding her face in the coverlet, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

Poor Benny could not understand the reason of her distress ; he had not heard the doctor's words, and if he had, he would not have understood them. ' Fan ! what have they done to you ? look up and tell me, Fan dear,' he said piteously.

But Fan made no answer ; and Mr. Marston went up to her, and, laying his hand kindly on her shoulder, said, ' Fan, I have brought some wine and jelly for Benny ; don't you think he would like some ? ' Fan rose immediately and wiped her tears away. He had touched the right chord, and Fan felt that as long as her little brother was spared to her, she must do everything in her power to please him and make him happy. She now busied herself in unfastening the bundle of good things which Mr. Marston had brought with him. There was wine and jelly for the little invalid, plenty of bread and tea, and a pair of roasted chickens, which Fan declared looked too good to be real. Wrapped round the whole was a large soft blanket. Fan's eyes sparkled again when she saw these treasures, and with Mr. Marston's help she arranged Benny's mattress nicely, and wrapped him up warmly in the beautiful new blanket. When all this was done, and they had

partaken of some of the dainties, Mr. Marston produced the pictures he had promised. There were six prettily-coloured prints, illustrating some of the well-known Bible stories. Benny was much delighted with them, and picked out the one he liked best. This was 'Jesus the Good Shepherd,' leading His flock, and tenderly carrying the lambs in His arms. Mr. Marston explained them all to the children, and then he bent down, and, kissing little Benny's peaceful, happy face, he said, 'Remember, little Benny, that you are one of Jesus' lambs, and He will always take care of you.'

'Oh yes, sir,' he answered, 'and Fan too,' patting her face softly with his little thin hand. 'I'm hoping some day to be in the green pastures,—maybe it will only be a little while now,—and you'll take care of Fan, sir, won't you? and we'll all meet up there soon. You'll come, won't you?'

'I hope so,' said Mr. Marston reverently.

‘Good-bye ; I’ll come again soon to see you.’
‘Fan,’ he said, as she opened the door for him,
‘be content, dear child, to leave the little one in
Christ’s arms, for no harm can come to him
there.’

These kind words brought the hot tears again
to poor Fan’s eyes, but she forced them back
bravely, remembering her resolution.





CHAPTER VI.

‘GOOD-BYE.’

WHEN Fan returned to the dying child, he was lying very still, but he opened his eyes as she came near, and murmured softly, ‘Oh! Fan, I’m very happy, but so tired—so tired!’ Then, after a moment’s pause, ‘Could you sing “Rest for the Weary,” Fan, and then read to me again?’

The sister complied, singing the hymn in a sadly quivering little voice; and when she had finished, she read the beautiful 23d Psalm, Benny’s favourite. When she came to the verse, ‘When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,’ she completely

broke down, and, hiding her face in the coverlet, she sobbed, 'Oh! Benny, you mustn't go just yet; I can never live without you.'

'Oh! Fan, don't cry so,' he said, quite distressed; 'if I do go first, it will only be for a little while, and then we'll both live with Jesus, and be always singing with our golden harps to Him. I remember, Fan, you told me once that mother said she would see the "King in His beauty." I think these are the right words, and I think it's almost the nicest name for Him. I like to think that every one will love Him there!'

In a day or two Mr. Marston called again, and read to the children many beautiful passages from the New Testament, explaining them as he went on. Then he knelt down and prayed that Jesus the Good Shepherd would come and take His weary little child home to His bright kingdom above, 'where all is peace, and joy, and love.'

'Ask Him to come soon,' whispered the dying

child ; and Mr. Marston added this prayer, ' Lord Jesus, come quickly !'

The next day was spent by the little sufferer in great restlessness, and by Fan in constant attendance at his side ; but at last the long-wished-for rest came. It had been a glorious day : the last rays of the setting sun had died away, the stars studded the clear sky, and night was falling silently over the great city, while to one of the inmates of that lonely attic the heavenly day was just beginning. Little Benny was lying quite still, half supported in Fan's arms. His blue eyes were already getting dim, but a look of perfect peace rested on his sweet face. He had no pain now,—that had quite gone away, giving once more to Fan a glimmer of hope, for she, poor child, thought it must be a good sign.

He had just wakened from a deep sleep, and as Fan bent over him he whispered softly, ' I've seen Him again, Fan, and He was holding out

His arms to me, and called out, "I'm just coming for you, Benny!" There! Fan, don't you see Him now? Yes, Lord Jesus, I'm coming now. Good-bye, Fan; come soon.' A few moments more, and suddenly his eyes were illumined with a heavenly light, and his little arms were extended as if greeting some one. 'Oh, I'm so happy—so very happy!' he said in a scarcely audible voice. His lips moved again; Fan bent down: 'Happy, happy!' he breathed; and with these words the silver cord was gently loosened, a short breath escaped his parted lips, and the pure little spirit had soared on angels' wings to the bright regions above. Happy, happy Benny! gone from this world of pain and sorrow to that happy land 'where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things are passed away.'




CHAPTER VII.

ALONE IN THE WORLD.

Poor Fan sat for a long time perfectly motionless, holding the little hand of what only a short hour ago had been her brother. A sense of great loneliness crept over her, and she wished and almost prayed that she might lie down and die too. But at last, worn out with her hard day of watching, she fell into a deep, unbroken sleep, dreaming of the little dead brother and the bright land to which he had gone.

The sun was high in the heavens before she awoke, and it was some minutes before she

remembered the sad occurrence of the preceding night ; but the little pale face lying on the pillow beside her recalled the agony she had before endured, and, kneeling beside the still form, she burst into tears, calling beseechingly on Benny to come back and speak to her, if it were only once more. At this moment the door was gently opened, and a quick glance showed the new-comer what had happened. Fan was so absorbed in her grief that she never heard Mr. Marston enter ; but when he laid his hand tenderly on her shoulder, she started and looked up, to see her kind friend regarding her with tender and compassionate pity. He made the poor child sit down beside him, and tell him as well as she could all the events of the sad evening. Then he spoke gently and lovingly to her of the gracious Saviour to whom her little brother had gone, till at last Fan's sobs grew fainter, and she listened quietly to all he was saying. Then



he took her away from the room of death, and gave her into the charge of a neighbour, who promised to take care of her for a few days.

‘I’ll be back to see you to-morrow, Fan,’ he said ; ‘and in the meantime I will arrange everything that is necessary,’ he told the woman as he went away.

The next day Fan went with Mr. Marston to take a last look at Benny, sleeping his last long sleep in his narrow bed. A sweet, happy smile rested on his marble face, and his little hands were folded on his bosom. A few white lilies were lying round him, and, as he lay peacefully among them, he looked as pure as they.

Mr. Marston had taken care to provide a last resting-place for little Benny ; and on the next day, he, Ragged Jack, and Fan followed his remains to a quiet little churchyard a short way into the country. There they left him,

sleeping under the green trees he loved so well.

After a few days Fan resumed her daily duty of selling matches, but now she was indifferent whether she had a successful day or not, and only worked to keep herself from starving ; for now there was no little brother to work for, and no one to whom she could relate all her adventures, as there used to be.

Some months passed before she saw Mr. Marston again, but at last, towards the end of August, he called to see her. He told her that he had been very ill, and was going to reside in the south of France for the winter ; consequently he would not see her again till the following spring. Poor Fan's heart sunk within her as she listened to his words. It seemed as if she was about to lose her last earthly friend, and it was with difficulty that she restrained the fast-gathering tears.


‘ Cheer up, Fan,’ her friend said kindly ; ‘ I’m

not going to stay away altogether, and you may be sure, when I am gone, that God will raise you up other friends. In the meantime, how would you like to be a little servant to an old friend of mine?’

Fan’s eyes sparkled ; to judge by her face, there was no doubt that she would like it. ‘ But I’m so small and stupid,’ she said anxiously, ‘ no one will want me.’

‘ Oh, I have arranged all that,’ he said ; ‘ and although you are small, it is to be hoped that you will grow some day. As to the stupidity, you don’t know what you can do till you’ve tried.’ He looked so kindly and pleasantly at her, that all Fan’s scruples vanished, and she felt quite ready to trust herself in his hands.

Mr. Marston’s plan was this : For many years he had been well and faithfully served by an old nurse, who was now so infirm as to render it quite impossible to take her to the Continent with the rest of the family, and it was arranged



that she should remain in a pretty little cottage a few miles from London till her master's return in spring.

The little cottage had all been nicely furnished, and everything was ready for Nurse Brown's reception, except the engagement of a little maid to wait on and help the old woman in her work. When Mr. Marston heard of this difficulty, immediately his thoughts flew to Fan, and he had gone to see her with the intention of disclosing this plan to her, as we have already seen him do. So it was all satisfactorily arranged, and Fan was engaged in due form. She was to help old nurse in the morning, cleaning the house, etc.; and her kind friend had arranged that she was to attend a neighbouring school in the evening, where she would be taught to read and write.

Fan felt very happy at the prospect before her, and thanked Mr. Marston as well as she could. She felt how utterly unable she was to

repay him for all his kindness to her and Benny, but, with childlike faith, she implicitly believed that he would be amply rewarded either in this world or the next by the Great Judge, 'who renders to every man according to his works.'





CHAPTER VIII.

'IN THE COUNTRY.'

HAN took up her abode at Rose Cottage on the 1st of September. When she first saw the place, her delight was unbounded, and she thought nothing could be more beautiful than the pretty clean cottage, with the clustering roses growing on its walls, from which the little dwelling had its name. Her one regret for leaving London was, that she would lose sight of Jack; but he had promised to come and see her some afternoon when his work was done, for, by Mr. Marston's recommendation, he had been made message-boy to a respectable grocer in the city. Before

many weeks had passed over, Fan's cheeks were almost rosy, and good substantial food made her little frame strong and healthy. Nurse Brown was very kind to her, and taught her by example as well as precept to be a good servant. Altogether she was a different creature from the little ragged match-girl of a month before ; for Mr. Marston, ever kind and thoughtful, had provided her with plenty of good clothes, so that she might go to school in the evening dressed respectably, like the rest of the pupils.

Thus several happy months passed away, and now both Fan and old nurse were beginning to look forward to Mr. Marston's return to London, when a sad accident happened to one of them. One dark evening, when coming home from school, Fan wandered from the right path, and while trying to discover the right one, her foot slipped, and she fell heavily among a heap of stones which were lying near ; she tried to rise,

but found that she had hurt herself too severely to move, and she fell back quite faint.

In the meantime old nurse was getting very anxious, for Fan never stayed out after the school closed, and she hobbled out to the cottage gate to look for the little lost one. She was peering anxiously up the road, when a sharp whistle startled her, and a voice said close at her side, 'Halloo! granny, is that you out? My! you're getting quite young again!'

'Go away with your impudence,' she answered. 'Call me granny, indeed! I not so much older than your own mother!'

Now it was well known that Nurse Brown was no friend of the schoolboys, and they on their part waged endless war with her, so she did not expect much sympathy from this one; however, she was so anxious to hear any news of Fan, that she condescended to call after the retreating figure of her tormentor, 'I suppose you have not seen Fan since school?'

‘Haven’t I, though?’ he answered, again confronting her. ‘I saw her make straight lines for home an hour ago; and so, granny, as she is a great friend of mine, I’ll be off to find her;’ and he bounded off almost before the words were spoken.

‘I never did see anything like these boys!’ said the old woman; ‘always in mischief—“fun,” they call it—nice fun, tormenting an old woman! But if he brings the child safe home, it will be more than he’s ever done before in the way of helping anybody.’

After a little searching, the boy fancied he saw something white in the bushes on the road-side, and, pushing his way through them, he saw little Fan lying as we left her on the heap of stones. Like a sensible boy, he did not try to raise her himself, but ran back to the road to seek for help. Fortunately, at that moment there were a company of labourers passing, to whom the boy told his story. Two of them

turned aside at his request, and one lifted the little insensible form in his strong arms, while the other good-naturedly went on to prepare old nurse, and go for the doctor. When little Fan reached the cottage, they laid her on her bed, and old nurse, in great distress, tenderly undressed her. The pain of being moved awoke Fan for a minute from the stupor into which she had fallen, and, seeing old nurse watching her with a white, scared face, she smiled faintly, and said, 'I'll soon be better; it isn't so very bad.'

By this time the doctor had arrived, and he examined little Fan very carefully. 'No bones broken,' he said. 'Where is the pain, my dear?' he asked her; but no answer came, for the little sufferer was past speaking. The doctor looked very serious. 'I'm afraid of some injury to the back,' he said; 'but I'll make sure to-morrow; I can do no more to-night;' and, after giving various directions to nurse, he went away. The next

day the doctor's worst fears were confirmed. There was some serious injury to the spine, and he feared that the child would never walk again. Fan passed three weeks of acute suffering, nursed in a most tender manner by old nurse ; but at last the pain somewhat subsided, and another fortnight found the invalid lying on a couch, drawn close up to the window, which was thrown open to admit the sweet, fresh breath of spring. One day, while lying thus, she heard a footstep on the gravel walk in front of the house, and before she was well aware of his approach, Mr. Marston stood by her side. He had just returned from his sojourn abroad, much benefited by the change, and, hearing of his little protégée's illness, he had come to see her. He sat for some time with her, talking cheerily, and telling her many curious stories, and just as he was going away, he said, 'Next time I come, Fan, I'll bring a gentleman from London to see your back, and we'll try if nothing else can be done.'

From that day there was a perceptible change for the better in Fan's spirits, and she looked forward with great pleasure to her kind friend's promise of a second visit. At last he did come, bringing with him the surgeon, as he had promised. The result of the examination was not more satisfactory than the village doctor's had been. It was clear, the surgeon said, that the injury to the spine was very serious; but although Fan would never be able to walk without help again, he hoped that with the aid of crutches she might soon move about. Poor Fan was very much distressed when she heard this, and she said sorrowfully, 'Oh! sir, how ever am I to live when I can't work? It was all so nice here, I was afraid I was too happy, and it would not last long.' 'Nay, my child,' said her friend, 'it was God who made you happy, and it is He also who sends you this pain. Trust in Him, dear child, for He will do all things well; and you need not fear for your future welfare when

you have Him to lean on.' Thus he spoke, comforting her in her trial, and cheering her to bear her burden patiently. After this, everything went on as usual for about a fortnight, when more changes took place.





CHAPTER IX.

NEW PLANS.

MR. MARSTON had originally intended that when he returned to London, old nurse should resume her former place in his family, and that Fan was to be maid to his little daughters; but poor Fan's illness had quite disarranged this plan, and it was still a source of anxiety to Mr. Marston how he should provide for her.

Now about this time Mr. Marston had occasion to dismiss one of the gamekeepers at his country house in Wales, and it occurred to him that if he could get a suitable family to live in the vacated lodge, Fan might go and live with them.

He was therefore looking out for such a family, and before long his search was rewarded. One evening, as he was sitting writing in his study, he heard a knock at the door, and one of the servants appeared, saying, 'Please, sir, here's our old housemaid Mary, who would like to see you.'

'Tell her to come in here,' he said.

In a few minutes Mary appeared, and while she is shaking hands with her old master, we will introduce her to you. She had been housemaid in Mr. Marston's house for several years, and always retained a great deal of respect and love for the family, having been found by Mr. Marston, a poor Scotch girl come to seek her fortune in the great city. But at last she had left, with the sanction and good-wishes of her master, to be married to John Thomson, a respectable and well-to-do carpenter, and a countryman of her own.

'Well, Mary,' said Mr. Marston, 'how are

you all? Just sit down and tell me the news.'

'Well, sir,' she said, 'I can't say but I'm well myself, but John's been very bad since you went away. He's been down all winter with a broken leg.'

'That's a bad job, Mary,' he said. 'How did it happen?'

Then followed a long catalogue of grievances—how John had fallen off a scaffolding, and the doctor said his leg would never be well till he went to the country; how the children had been ill with the measles, and all the little savings had been spent, while John was yet unable to earn anything to keep them from starving.

Mr. Marston listened patiently to the end, then comforted her as best he could, saying he would come and talk over the matter next day with John, and finally he sent her down to the kitchen to get some supper and some good

things for the sick children. After she was gone, Mr. Marston sat for some time thinking, and so occupied was he, that he unconsciously muttered half-aloud to himself, 'I do think these are the very people to send to Wales; I'll go to-morrow and give him a chance.'

The promised visit was duly paid next day, and all parties were satisfied with the proposition. It turned out that John had formerly been a gamekeeper in Scotland, and knew the work; and as his leg was gradually becoming well, he was most thankful to take the situation.

'One of them lovely lodges!' said Mary, who was familiar with the place, and, it must be confessed, had often thought 'How nice it would be for John and me!' and now her wishes were to be realized at last.

Poor John was too overwhelmed with gratitude to say much, and he could only exclaim, clasping Mr. Marston's hands in both of his, 'Eh! sir, I

don't know how to thank ye ; but I'm certain you'll be rewarded some day for your kindness.'

The plan of taking little Fan to live with them met with no less approval than everything else had done by the worthy couple.

'She'll be right welcome,' said Mary ; 'and it will be somebody to speak to when all the rest are out.' So it was all arranged that the lodge was to be taken possession of on the 1st of June, by the happy, grateful family.

When Mr. Marston told Fan of this new plan, her delight was unbounded. The very thought of seeing the grand mountains, which nurse had so often told her of, filled her with delight. Her only regret was leaving old nurse, who had been so kind to her ; but the faithful creature was so happy at the thought of seeing 'her children' again (as she called her master's family), that Fan felt quite selfish in not sharing her joy.

'Well, Fan,' said her kind friend, 'so you approve of this plan, do you ?'

‘Oh, sir,’ answered the child, the tears in her eyes, ‘I can’t tell you how grateful I am, but I feel so happy! Oh, if only little Benny was here! Benny! my little Benny! why did you go from your Fan, and leave her all alone, just when you might have been happy like me?’ she sobbed, all the bitterness of her old sorrow coming over her like a mighty flood.

Mr. Marston, ever kind, did his best to cheer her up. ‘Dear Fan,’ he said, ‘try to think how happy little Benny is in the green pastures above,—far happier than he ever could have been on earth; but he still rejoices in your joy, and is waiting and watching for you, till you come to join him again in the kingdom above.’ His words, as usual, had a soothing effect on Fan, and he left her, thinking over all he had said, and trying to reconcile herself to the loss of the never-forgotten, much-loved little brother.

Once again Mr. Marston paid Fan a visit before she left for her new home. It was the

last Saturday of May that he drove up to the little cottage in his carriage,—an unusual thing for him to do, as he generally walked, but on this day he had a particular motive for driving, as you will see.

‘Good morning, Fan,’ he said cheerfully as he entered the room. ‘I see you are looking at my horses. How would you like to take a drive to-day?’

The gleam of joy in the child’s eyes gave sufficient answer. While she was getting dressed, her kind friend told her that he thought the drive to-day would somewhat prepare her for her long journey to Wales, which she would have to take soon. Then he carried her to the carriage in his strong arms, and laid her gently among the cushions, wrapping her up warmly in the fur rugs; for although it was a warm spring day, Fan’s weak little frame was very susceptible of cold. Away they went, rolling smoothly along the country roads,

then through the outskirts of London, and into the country again. All at once Fan exclaimed, 'Oh! I'm sure I've been here before; I remember that old tree quite well. Oh! could it have been that day we came with Benny to the churchyard?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Marston, 'it is. I thought you would like to come again.' Very soon the carriage came to a standstill, and Fan was lifted tenderly out, and carried in those strong arms to the quiet shady spot where they had laid little Benny. Here a surprise awaited her. Raised over the little grave was a white marble headstone, with the simple words which spoke so much to Fan and her friend :

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

LITTLE BENNY,

WHO DIED 23D FEBRUARY 18—

AGED 7 YEARS.

'He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.'—ISAIAH xl. 11.

Poor Fan! This last act of kindness seemed too much for her, and, hiding her face in her hands, she burst into tears,—tears of heartfelt joy and gratitude, which amply rewarded Mr. Marston for his thoughtful kindness.





CHAPTER X.

THE HOME IN WALES.

FAN stood the long journey very well, and it was a happy party who landed at the entrance to the ivy-covered lodge. Mr. Marston's country residence was indeed an attractive one. The property had belonged to his ancestors for many generations. It is needless to describe the interior of the old mansion, as our story has nothing to do with it ; but the lodge, the future residence of little Fan, is worthy of a few remarks.

It was situated on the confines of the extensive woods which skirted the property, the grand

Welsh hills rose majestically behind it, and a little rippling stream flowed close past the peaceful dwelling. The cottage itself was built after the model of a Swiss chalet, and well it suited the wild majestic scenery around. Roses and honeysuckle covered the porch, and a pretty flower and vegetable garden surrounded the house. It was certainly a picturesque little spot, and Fan could imagine nothing more lovely,—it was perfect in her idea.

Another pleasant surprise was yet to come. When they were all comfortably seated at the cheerful tea, Fan on a little couch made expressly for her, a knock was heard at the door, and a voice familiar to Fan's ear said, 'May I come in, Mrs. Thomson?' Scarcely waiting for permission, a curly head was thrust in at the open door, and a tall lanky form soon presented itself. 'Jack!' cried Fan, quite delighted at seeing her old friend again; and indeed it was hard to believe that the ragged, dirty newspaper boy

was the same as this blooming, well-dressed lad. Of course it was all Mr. Marston's kind doing, —no one doubted that. Jack had been engaged as under gamekeeper, and had so far given great satisfaction. After tea was over, and the children put to bed, the others gathered round the fire, talking of past experiences, and all heartily commending Mr. Marston, and thinking God had done for them 'above all that they could ask or think.' Then John offered up a simple prayer to their heavenly Father for His unbounded goodness and mercy, 'which had surely followed them all the days of their life.'





CHAPTER XI.

THE END.

LET us now, in conclusion, take one more look at little Fan before we say farewell.

A year has passed since we last saw her, and it is again a beautiful June day. Everything has gone well with the Thomson family since we left them : John has proved himself a first-rate gamekeeper, and Jack is giving great satisfaction to his kind patron. Mrs. Thomson is the same pretty-looking woman that she used to be, the happy mother of four healthy children, and little Fan is the joy and comfort of the whole household. According to the doctor's

prediction, she is now able to move about with the aid of crutches, and although she cannot help much in the household *work*, she aids considerably the household *funds* by cutting pretty boxes and other fancy articles out of wood, and selling them at the nearest town. As we stand contemplating the peaceful scene, the sound of children's voices strikes on the ear. Just to satisfy our curiosity, let us take a peep through the trees. There, under a shady beech-tree, little Fan is seated, the children clustered round her; Jack is standing, rake in hand, at a little distance, listening, unperceived by the others; Fan has just finished telling her earnest listeners the story of her never-forgotten little brother Benny; and now the sweet, childlike voices have united in singing his favourite hymn while on earth:

‘There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day.’

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